

A Pilot's Journey Into Fear in Cuba

Miami, April 21—Pilot Woodruff Mead today told the harrowing story of how he was kidnaped in mid-air and forced to fly two men to Cuba.

He landed in the face of machine gun barrels and was held in prison for a week. He was returned here last night. His two kidnapers also were returned and arrested by the FBI.

Mead, 23, of Albertson, L. I., said, "I can't tell you how scared I was and there's no way to describe the filth of that Principe Prison where they had us for a while."

"I took off with two men I thought were Harold Moore and Jim Eastham. They wanted a demonstration ride and to take moving pictures of Miami Beach. We left Tamiami airport 20 minutes after 11 on the 13th—yes, Friday the 13th; I'll never forget.

A Gun at His Neck

"I was at 8,000 feet over Crandon Park (a recreation area at the ocean front) and Eastham, sitting beside me, was trying out the controls.

"Just then, I felt a pistol in the back of my neck. They told me to head south. Then they told me to turn off shore and follow a heading of 210 degrees to Cuba.

"When they pulled the gun on me, Moore reached over and shut off the radio. There was no way for me to tell anyone what was going on.

"I was Cuba about 80 miles east of Havana and followed a highway toward town, looking for a place to land. Finally, I saw a field. I didn't know it



WOODRUFF MEAD

On Friday the 13th.

would turn out to be a military training field. On my final approach I saw machine guns pointed right at me—I was scared.

"We landed and I turned off the engine. It was a few minutes before a guard arrived and took up to Operations in a truck. Then, they questioned us for about two hours each.

"Moore and Eastham told the

Cubans they had forced me to fly to Havana. The Cubans asked me if I worked for the FBI, CIA, Immigration, and so on. They asked me if I liked 'socialism'—they didn't say Communism.

"They told me the penalty for violating Cuban air space was five years in jail. I was still scared."

Five Days in Two Rooms

"Finally, they took us into town to the headquarters. They left Moore—it must have been five days—in one room with a TV set. We had milk and a hard roll for breakfast.

"For lunch, we had fried bananas and rice or bean soup and guava. For supper, I got fried bananas again.

"Yesterday, they took us to Principe Prison for five hours. That place is unbelievable. Men are living on hard stone floors. The blankets are filthy. I was scared of death.

"Then they took us from Principe to deportation headquarters and told us we were leaving the morning. I was nervous and didn't know what to do.

"I was Star Trek looking for me or just been forgotten."

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW